

# SACERS Clarifications 2014

Notes have been adapted and modified specifically for use in YoungStar (Wisconsin's Child Care Rating Program)

Revised 2.7.2014

**General Note for SACERS:** In all items involving any type of interaction, "staff" refers to those adults that are in the classroom and who work with the children daily (or almost daily). This can include volunteers, if they are in the classroom daily. Adults who are not a regular daily part of the classroom do not count in evaluating whether the requirements of the item are met. For example, if a therapist, parent, a director or an owner of a program comes into the classroom and interacts with children, for short or irregular periods, these interactions do not count in scoring *unless they are extremely negative*.

The term "some" occurs most frequently in indicators that represent a minimal (3) level of quality, although occasionally it occurs at higher levels. In determining when to give credit for "some" in an indicator, consider the requirements in the parallel indicators at the lower and next higher level of quality. For example, if under inadequate no materials are required, then some would mean "one or more". In cases where a plural is used with the term "some", then more than one would be required to give credit. When terms such as "very few" or "very little" or "rarely" are used under inadequate, then "some" represents a mid-point between what is required for the 1 and for the 5.

The term "accessible" requires that children can reach and use materials by themselves, during the times that the materials are open for use. For school-aged children, if materials are stored in closed spaces, they can be considered accessible *only* if it is *observed* that children can freely access and use the materials when allowed. This access must be provided as part of the usual daily (or almost daily) practice, with only unusual exceptions. For example, if materials are accessible four days a week, but not accessible on a weekly special activity day, this would still be considered accessible. However, if the materials were accessible only once or twice a week, this would not be given credit as being accessible, unless specified in the item. When the time for access is specified in an item, (for example, once a week or daily) base the score for accessibility on what is required in the item.

When the term accessible is used in an indicator at the good (5) level of quality, it is required that children can reach and use the materials for at least 30 minutes in a typical afterschool program of 3 or more hours. There is no specific amount of time required at the lower quality levels, unless otherwise stated but children should be able to have access for enough time to use materials productively.

"Gross motor equipment" includes *anything* provided for or regularly permitted by the staff to be used for stimulating gross motor activity. This includes manufactured, custom-made and/or natural objects used for climbing, sliding, balancing or other gross motor activity. It does not include objects meant to be used for other purposes, such as benches to sit on, shade trees or shelves children are not supposed to climb.

Scores should be based on observation of how the space, equipment, and supervision function. Especially with unusual, natural or innovative play opportunities, which may vary greatly, it is essential to observe carefully to see how children use these provisions and, what hazards and problems they encounter. Minor potential hazards, that do not cause any observed problems, such as tree roots, low branches, hills, benches, low outdoor stages, should not be considered in scoring. Scores below 3 should be used only in situations that are very dangerous for children.

There are 3 items in the scale that consider safety issues in gross motor play. Furnishings for gross motor activities (8) covers the appropriateness of equipment, e.g., height, challenge level. Safety practice (15) includes physical hazards described in the Playground Information handout, such as cushioning surfaces,

equipment hazards. Staff supervision of children (31) indicators 1.1 and 3.1 focus on staff protection and facilitation of play. It is important to score what is observed in the item(s) where the information applies.

The term "weather permitting" is used in several items of the scale with regard to when children can participate in outdoor activities. "Weather permitting means almost every day, unless there is active precipitation, or extremely hot or cold conditions. Weather does not permit outside activity for children when there are public announcements that advise people to remain indoors due to weather conditions such as high levels of pollution, extreme cold or heat that might cause health problems. It is sometimes said, "There is no bad weather; only bad clothes." Therefore, children should be dressed properly and taken outdoors on most days. This might require that the schedule be changed to allow children outdoor play in the early morning when it will be very hot later in the day. Or it might require that the program ensure that children have boots, and a change of clothes for a day when the grass is wet. After bad weather, staff should check the outdoor area before children go out, dry off equipment, sweep away water, block off puddles, and so forth, as needed. Programs with protected outdoor areas, such as a deck or patio are more likely to be able to meet the requirements for allowing outdoor activity daily, weather permitting.

Handwashing is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

In order to clarify the different but related functions of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to remove germs, "Caring for Our Children" states that cleaning means physically removing dirt and contamination using soap, water and applying friction, thus exposing any remaining germs on the dry, clean surface. Sanitizing means reducing germs on an inanimate surface or object to a safe level. Disinfecting means destroying germs on an inanimate surface or object. A sanitizer should be used on food contact surfaces or any object that is mouthed. A disinfectant should be used only on diaper changing tables, toilets, counter tops, door and cabinet handles. Only EPA approved products are acceptable, and all sanitizers and disinfectants must be used according to the instructions on the container in order to be safe.

Caring for our Children has issued a new recommendation for use of a diluted bleach solution for sanitizing and disinfecting because many brand name companies have changed their bleach solution and there is no longer a consistent solution across different brands. The new recommendation advises us to:-use only EPA registered products for sanitizing and disinfecting; -follow the manufacturer's instructions for diluting the bleach solution and for the required contact time.

## **1. Indoor space**

**1.3** Score Yes when space is in very poor repair.

**3.3** Score Yes when space is generally in good repair, and do not penalize for small problems.

## **2. Space for gross motor activities**

**1.2** Outdoor space completely lacks protection from the elements (Ex: lacks shade, windbreak or drainage)

**5.2** In order to give credit, determine whether the surfaces in the outdoor space enable children to successfully participate in different types of play. For example, each different surface must be large enough to permit a type of play without much interruption from other activities. At least one hard and one soft play surface must be accessible daily outdoors.

**7.2** Age groups = K-3, 4-6, or older. *N/A* if all children are in the same age group.

**7.3** Since this indicator is at the 7 level, the playground should be fairly close. Take the age of the children into consideration. "Convenient" includes more than close (e.g., on same level).

## **3. Space for privacy**

No score of 2 is possible.

#### **4. Room arrangement**

**1.2** Interpret “rooms” as “space”.

**Omit all of #4a ("When doing homework is part of the program"). Add the following indicators to #4 ("Room arrangement").**

**1.4** No separate area for homework or other quiet study.

**3.4** Separate area for homework or other quiet study.

**5.5** Separate area is quiet, not crowded, and has suitable furniture for homework or other quiet study.

**7.3** Easy access to areas where reference materials are stored (ex: library is open, computer accessible).

#### **5. Furnishings for routine care**

Mats or cots are not required for older children, or where napping in after-school groups is not part of the program.

**1.1, 3.1** If no furnishings are provided for individual storage of children's possessions, such as cubbies or hooks for coats/book bags, score 1.1 Yes. If there is adequate provision that allows the children to store their possessions in an individual space, then score 3.1 Yes if other requirements are met. If there is some small, individual provision, such as envelopes or small boxes for artwork or notes, that does not meet the needs for storing most of the children's possessions, do not give credit for 3.1.

**5.1** Appropriately sized (same as child-sized) is defined in the note printed in the book: when children sit in chairs, their feet must touch the floor, elbows comfortably rest on table. Observe also to be sure that chairs and tables are not too small, so children's knees are not cramped under the table. If 75% of chairs and tables are appropriately sized, give full credit for 5.1. If 60-74% are appropriate, give a score of 4.

**7.1** Tables must appear to be clean (not necessarily observed to be sanitized) to give credit for this indicator.

#### **6. Furnishings for learning and recreational activities**

**5.1** Seventy-five percent (75%) of chairs and tables must be appropriately-sized to give credit.

**5.2** In order to give credit for this indicator, work done by the children in the school age group and materials of interest to them, must be displayed in the space used by the children for most of the time.

#### **7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort**

**3.1, 5.1** Because one rug or small carpeted area provides limited softness, credit is given for this minimal provision of softness in 3.1. A rug or small carpeted area does not count towards meeting the requirements of 5.1, which, based on the types of examples given, requires a higher level of softness.

**5.1** Soft furnishings must be accessible for children to use at least a third of the time children are in care to meet the requirement for being regularly accessible.

**7.1** If only 1 additional softness, give a 6, if 2 or more, give a 7.

## **8. Furnishings for gross motor activities**

**1.2, 3.1, 5.2** Age-appropriate or appropriate requires that the material/equipment is challenging but not frustrating, and safe for the children who use it.

**1.3 & 5.3** Portable equipment means the portability is part of the play potential for children (e.g., wheel toys, balls, jump ropes, hula hoops, roller skates, bats, tennis rackets. Equipment that children cannot or do not move as part of play is considered stationary, even though it may not be anchored, and therefore can be moved by adults.

**3.2** This indicator requires that there be *some provision* for portable gross motor materials.

**5.1** To give credit for "variety", the equipment must provide opportunities to use at least 3 different skills (such as climbing, playing basketball, balancing, sliding, hanging by arms), beyond what is possible on flat ground.

**5.2** This indicator requires that all stationary equipment is appropriate for the children in the specific group being observed.

**5.3** This indicator requires that portable gross motor materials are taken out and made accessible daily. The teacher can be responsible for choosing the materials and making them accessible.

**7.1** The intent of this indicator is to provide children and staff the opportunity to be creative in gross motor activities, rather than just using equipment and materials in the same way. Other examples that could be credited here include an obstacle course made of things that children or staff can rearrange to provide new challenges; cubes and planks that can be arranged into various kinds of balance beams, cones that can be placed in different ways to allow variation in bike-riding paths, or sturdy boxes that can be arranged into various types of tunnels to crawl through.

**7.3** Materials are chosen and made accessible by the children, not the staff.

## **9. Access to host facilities**

No score of N/A is possible.

**1.1** If the program does not have any *play* space that is *not* shared with another group, even if the other group is not using it when the school-age program is using it, score 1.1 Yes. "Dedicated space" is *not* shared space, where the needs of the school-age program are secondary. The play space must be an area where children can participate in activities while in the program, either indoors or outdoors. It cannot consist of a closet for materials, or office, or bulletin board set aside for the program. It can not be a classroom used for another purpose during other times, where the school-age program has very limited use, in terms of what can be placed in the space, or the materials children are allowed to access in the space. It is possible, however, that dedicated space can be used for other purposes while the school-age program is not present. However, the

primary use of the space must be to meet the needs of the school-age program. For example, space is still considered "dedicated" if it is used for providing therapy or conducting parent teacher meetings while the school-aged children are not present, but these do not limit the use of the space by the school-age program.

**3.1, 5.2 & 7.1** If the school-age program has its *own* indoor and outdoor areas that are not shared with any other group, give credit for each of these indicators. For example, if the school age program is in a child care center and has its own classroom and playground, or if the program is in its own building with its own playground, score 3.1, 5.2, and 7.1 Yes.

**5.2 & 7.1** In order to give credit for "exclusive use of shared facilities", a program that must share facilities must be the *only* user of the shared facilities during the time of use. To give credit for "a number of *shared* facilities" the after school program should have use of 2 *or more* facilities/spaces in addition to the primary indoor shared space used by the program. If the school-age program has shared use, but does not share with other groups while using these areas, then give credit.

## **10. Space to meet personal needs of staff**

**5.1** To give credit, the lounge area cannot be used for children during the program operating hours. Adults must be able to get away from child responsibilities while using this space. Therefore the space cannot be used, for example, to isolate children who are sick or misbehaving, as often occurs in the program office.

## **11. Space to meet professional needs of staff**

**3.1** Convenient access to phone requires a phone on site (not necessarily in the space used for the children) and if in a locked room, teacher has means to access the phone (e.g., through walkie-talkies, intercom).

**7.1** N/A if school-age group is part of a child care center.

## **12. Health policy**

No score of 6 possible on this item.

## **13. Health practice**

*Score indicators 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, and 5.1 based on provision for children who have serious infectious illnesses that require special care, not children with the more common mild infectious illnesses that do not impair their ability to participate in the group and do not require additional care. For more information see "Caring For Our Children" (2002, American Academy of Pediatrics and American Public Health Association), pages 123-129.*

**3.2** Must be scored NO to score "5" or higher.

**3.3** Instead of being posted, children's medication schedules and allergies can be kept in a notebook, as long as all staff, including substitutes, are well-aware of the information and have easy access.

## **14. Emergency and safety**

**7.1** If more than 1 staff member have CPR certificates, but not all have them, give a score of 6.

## **15. Safety practice**

**1.2 & 3.1** Safety of gross motor equipment is included in this item. Anything permitted by the staff to be used for stimulating gross motor activity must have an adequate fall zone if there is a potential for children to be injured from a fall. Height and velocity should be considered when determining whether a fall zone with cushioning surface is needed. Although the CPSC Guidelines apply only to anchored equipment, for purposes of scoring, similar standards should be applied to all gross motor equipment from which falls can occur. However, CPSC Guidelines should only be cited for anchored equipment. (See General Notes for further information.) A fence is required for safety because of the hazards associated with children "wandering off," even in what appear, superficially, to be safe areas, or the entry into the play area of unexpected visitors, for example people who do not have the well-being of the children in mind, or animals that might be dangerous. Score 1.2 "Yes" only when the complete space is very dangerous, with little room for children to move freely without facing major hazards, or if there is one extreme hazard, such as the space being unfenced, or no attempt to provide any fall zones where needed. Indicator 3.1 requires that no major safety hazard is observed, such as a very inadequate fall zone, or only a few minor safety hazards are observed. If there are many minor hazards or one major hazard in a space that also has a large amount of safe space for children to participate in active physical play, score 1.2 "No", and 3.2 "No."

**3.3** If an emergency exit route is displayed, credit can be given for this indicator.

**3.5** If the emergency number "911" is posted near the phone, credit can be given for this indicator.

## **16. Attendance**

**Note:** No N/A is possible for score on this item.

**3.1** Interpret "are asked to" as "are required to".

**3.2** If recording of attendance is not observed, ask teacher question.

**5.1** The communications system must be always available to give credit for this indicator (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

**5.2** For NC scoresheet, no N/A is possible for 5.2.

**7.1** No score of 6 is possible.

## **17. Departure**

**3.2** If parents are "asked" to notify staff of alternate pick-up arrangements, give credit.

## **18. Meals/ snacks**

**1.4 & 3.5** Sanitary conditions such as table sanitizing, using clean serving and eating utensils, protecting food from table surface with a plate, paper towel or napkin, are considered in this indicator. If table sanitizing is not observed, for example, if children go to lunchroom for snack, ask

questions to determine whether tables have been sanitized and not re-contaminated before food was served. Hand washing is considered in item 19, not in this item.

**3.4** Check to be sure the menu represents the current time period. If substitutions are made, the posted menu should be corrected, and the meal/snack should meet Meal Pattern Guidelines just as any other meal/snack would.

A food/beverage substitution made in case of allergies must meet the primary meal/snack nutrient contribution of the food/beverage it replaces. For example, in the case of milk, the substitute beverage needs to be equal in calcium and protein. Therefore, water, juice, or calcium-enriched juice is not a milk substitute since it does not replace the protein, but a vegetarian milk, such as soy milk, is. To get additional information about whether substitutes can be credited, ask staff, "How are substitutes made for foods/beverages children cannot eat?"

## **19. Personal hygiene**

**1.1** Interpret "little" as little or *no* attention paid to personal hygiene.

**3.1** "Some" means that staff might remind children sometimes and not others: partial or haphazard attention. To score a 5, regular or consistent attention must be paid to hygiene.

**3.2** Tissues (the type used for nose blowing) must be accessible in order to give credit. Toilet paper is not an acceptable substitute.

**5.1** Credit can be given for this indicator if adequate hand washing takes place at least 75 percent of the time when needed.

## **20. Arts and crafts**

**5.3** Interpret this indicator to mean that an occasional activity might require the child to closely follow an example to create a product, but this happens infrequently. Most of the arts and crafts allow individual creativity. Even if each person is making the same basic product, each should be able to do it in his/her own creative way. For example, if children make picture frames, each is encouraged to decorate it in his/her own way.

**7.1** If only one component (new skills or long range project) is present, score 6.

## **21. Music and movement**

**1.1 & 3.1** The provision for music/movement activities must be a regular part of the program. This can include teacher led group singing, or provision of materials to enable children to listen to music, dance, or sing along. If there is some provision, but less than weekly, score 2.

**5.1** Must be daily. Requires that music activities are available as free choice. This does not mean that the tape player has to be accessible, but if the teacher's help is needed, it is given upon request.

**5.2** "Variety" means that there must be variety in materials for 2 of the 3 categories (cassettes, dance props, musical instruments). The materials must be accessible *daily* to give credit, and children should have the option of using them for at least 30 minutes daily. If musical instruments are used as dance props, they cannot be counted as 2 different categories. Another category must be provided as well.

**7.1** If every 2 weeks to monthly, score 6.

## **22. Blocks and construction**

**3.2** This indicator means “appropriate” in the most basic sense. If children seem to be able to use materials well, without major inconveniences, give credit to this indicator. For example, if blocks are being used, there should be a level, firm surface, and not too many disruptions.

## **23. Drama/ theater**

\* Materials: dress-up clothes, costumes, props, puppets, action figures, dolls (both adult and baby).

**3.2** For this indicator, "support offered by staff" means that staff have made space and materials needed for play accessible to the children. Children play without much adult input. When disagreements occur in the play, staff participate in helping to solve problems.

**5.2** To give credit for this indicator, more active involvement is required than that required in 3.2. Staff add to the children's possibilities for dramatic play. For example, if the drama is very active, staff might provide children with a larger space. Or if children need more props, staff might help them find what they need.

## **24. Language/reading activities**

**3.2** Credit can be given when this is done by either staff or older children, who are fluent in reading or telling a story.

**5.1** The age of the children in the group is a key factor in deciding appropriateness. Younger children (k-2) who still may not be able to separate fantasy and reality should have no access to inappropriate books or games. Appropriateness includes content that is not violent, sexually explicit or biased towards any group. For older children, the vast majority of materials should be appropriate, with no materials being extremely inappropriate, for example, graphic depictions of violence and cruelty. Since children will probably not lack exposure to inappropriate materials in other settings, the school age program should concentrate on positive input. Provision of books and games on different reading levels is also part of appropriateness.

**5.2** To give credit, you must observe at least one instance during the observation.

**5.3** To give credit, you must observe more than one instance during the observation.

## **25. Math/ reasoning activities**

**3.1** Interpret “games and activities” as “games/activities.”

**5.1** Refers to math-focused games and activities, not practical-life use of math, as in 5.2. Interpret the phrase "games and activities" as "games and/or activities". If there are 3-5 games that are accessible, then give credit for this indicator.

**5.2** intent of this indicator is for adults to link math and numbers to practical life events in the children's daily schedule. Therefore, look for use of numbers during meals or when fixing own snacks, setting the table for correct number of children, transition times, using a timer to take turns, keeping scores in ball games, taking attendance by children, talking about times to do things and looking at the clock, arriving/leaving, etc. Do not



count play activities such as number games, computer games, or homework in determining the score for this indicator.

"Number talk" or number experiences as part of practical life events should be observed more than once during the observation to give credit for this indicator.

**7.1** "Coded for difficulty" requires that games be labeled or stored with some indicator of difficulty, for example, with a label on a box showing appropriateness for certain ages. Credit can be given for "introduced when children are ready" if children are observed to be playing games that appear challenging, but not frustrating, and/or if adult is observed helping children learn how to play game.

## **26. Science/nature**

**3.1** If materials are accessible less than daily, but at least weekly, score 2. If there are *either* materials *or* equipment present, but not both, score 2.

**5.1** "Variety" of science/nature materials requires that children get different types of experiences in this area. A specific number of materials is not assigned to the requirement because "variety" will depend on the size of the group, the abilities of the children, and the types of materials used. Types of science/nature materials include living things to care for (plants, pets), books and posters, games, equipment to use in simple experiments, such as measuring tools, magnets, magnifying glasses, microscope, gardening tools.

**5.2** May ask question, if not clear from observation.

**5.3** At least 1 instance must be observed.

## **27. Cultural awareness**

**1.2** Refers only to the staff's interaction or approach to children. This includes stereotypes of gender as well as ethnicity and race.

**3.1** To score Yes, there must be at least 2 examples in any category (books, pictures or games/toys) of racial, cultural or non-traditional gender representation.

**5.1** Since non-traditional gender representation is required in 5.2, it is no longer required in 5.1. To give credit for 5.1, there must be at least 3 examples of diversity found in books, 3 in pictures, and 3 examples in games/toys easily observed by the children. Among these materials, race, culture, age and abilities must each be represented to some extent. However, each is not required in each category of material (books, pictures, games/toys). Examples of diversity that show violence/prejudice or that give a negative social message cannot be counted to meet the requirement. Toys representing violence against any group, such as "Cowboys and Indians" will not count for this indicator.

**5.2** This means that materials actively promote equal opportunities for men and women to participate in similar activities. "Visible" can be interpreted as "present" or "shown". To give credit, materials must be accessible for viewing by children. To give credit, at least 2 examples of non-traditional gender representation are required.

**5.3** This can mean an acceptance of children's choices of the activities in which they want to participate (ex. boys are allowed to play with dolls; girls are allowed to freely participate in blocks or carpentry).

**7.2** Observe to see how the staff deal with children when problems occur. If no instances are observed, then ask what staff would do if problems related to bias or stereotyping occur.

## **28. Greeting/departing**

1.1 N/A permitted.

3.1 N/A permitted. To give credit for this indicator, kindergarten children must be escorted by a responsible adult.

3.2 Must be *No* to score 5 or higher.

5.1 N/A permitted. To give credit for this indicator, K-1 children must be escorted by a responsible adult.

5.2 To give credit, greeting must be warm, and obviously used to welcome children into program rather than to only give children direction upon entering the program.

7.1 No score of 6 can be given.

## **29. Staff-child interactions**

3.1 Must be *No* to score 5 or higher.

3.2 Must be *No* to score 5 or higher.

## **30. Staff-child communication**

3.1 Replace the word "brief" with the word "some".

3.2 Replace the word "limited" with the word "some".

## **31. Staff supervision of children**

7.2 This indicator requires that a person knowledgeable in a team sport or other activity (e.g., pottery) is available for instruction and guidance so that the children can develop their skills. This means more than just supervising a game of tag, or coloring with markers.

## **32. Discipline**

No score of 4 is possible.

## **34. Interactions between staff and parents**

3.2 Omit the word "only" from the indicator.

## **35. Staff interaction**

Score this item *N/A* if there is only 1 staff member working with the children.

### **36. Relationship between program staff and teachers**

*N/A* if program is not located in children's school.

### **37. Schedule**

If a schedule varies throughout the week, base your scores on what the children experience most of the time. For example, if the Friday schedule is more relaxed, while the rest of the week is more restricted due to time for homework, then base the score on the four days of the more rigid schedule.

**3.2** To give credit, schedule should generally represent what currently happens in the program.

**5.2** Score *N/A* if only one age group is in the program.

**5.3** For this indicator, "planned" means teacher-initiated; "spontaneous" means child-initiated.

### **38. Free choice**

**3.1** In some programs, opportunity for free choice may be very limited, but some free choice still exists. For example, a program may allow children to choose a specific area to play in at the beginning of an activity period, and then the children can not change their choice for the rest of the time. In this case, credit would be given for 3.1 (there is some free choice) but not for 5.1.

### **39. Administrative relationship between program staff and program host**

Program host is the agency responsible for the facility within which the school-aged program is housed.

*N/A* if part of a child care center.

No mid-point scores (2,4, 6) are possible on this item.

### **40. Use of community resources**

**3.1** Acceptable use of community resources can be having representatives from the resources come to the program. For example, a fire fighter may visit the program to explain about his or her job, or the Agriculture Extension Agency may provide special gardening activities on-site. Children do not have to leave the program site to give credit for a program's use of community resources.

**3.2 & 3.3** Since there is no *N/A* option on the North Carolina rated license score sheet for these indicators, score Yes if all community resources are used on-site, rather than off-site, and no permission is needed.

**5.1** Credit can be given if regularly scheduled use is only during the full time program, e.g., on teacher work days or during school vacation.

**5.2** Sufficient number of adults will depend on where the group goes, risk potential, age of children, size of group.